

Sermon to the saints which are at Topeka, Kansas – Sunday, January 11, 1959

Good morning this is Fred Phelps. I'm speaking again today, on the subject of predestination; absolute predestination and the sovereignty of God. If you feel that too much time is given to this important doctrine on our broadcast, consider for a moment that almost nowhere nowadays do you hear pure Calvinism preached. One can call the role of the well-known and nationally esteemed religious leaders of today, regardless of denomination, and almost without exception, these men preach Arminian theology. They preach that God is thoroughly disappointed, because he cannot have his way with men's hearts, and that he is striving somewhat desperately and certainly incessantly to get men and nations to behave themselves so that he can bless them. But mortal man will not cooperate with God they say, and so God is frustrated in his efforts to save men's souls and bring about universal peace and happiness.

Now against this God-dishonoring theological hodgepodge, we dare to lift a voice confessedly insignificant to remind all who will listen, that God is still God. He is not confused; he is not frustrated; he is not taken by surprise. Indeed he is in full control of every situation telling the end from the beginning. All that happens in time he decreed to happen from eternity. His dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom is from generation to generation and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand or say unto him **"What doest thou?, "** (Dan. 4:35.) It is charged that this doctrine leads to fatalism; that it is a calumny upon God; that it is dangerous to expound. In a way of refutation of this wicked charge, I should like present four additional reasons this morning while this doctrine of predestination and God's sovereignty is valuable, and ought to be preached.

First, it begets a spirit of sweet resignation, to bow before the sovereign will of God is one of the great secrets of peace and happiness. What a word is that in **Leviticus 10:3: "And Aaron held his peace."** Look at the circumstances.

"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censor, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Aaron held his peace." (Lev. 10, 1-3)

Two of Aaron's sons were slain. Slain by a visitation of divine judgement and they were probably intoxicated at the time. Moreover, this trial came upon Aaron suddenly, without anything to prepare him for it, yet he held his peace. This is a precious exemplification of the power of God's all sufficient grace. Consider now an utterance which fell from the lips of David:

"And the king said unto Zaddok: 'carry back the arc of God into the city; if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it, and its habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I. Let him do to me what seemeth good unto him,'" 2nd Sam. 15:25.

The circumstances which confronted David were exceedingly trying to the human heart. David was sore-pressed with sorrow. His own son was driving him from the throne and seeking his very life. Whether he would ever see Jerusalem and the tabernacle again he knew not, but he was so fully assured that God's sovereign will was best that even though it meant the loss of the throne and the loss of his life, he was

content for him to have his way; as he said: **“let him do to me what seemeth him good.”** Now amid the shadows of the Old Testament dispensation, David was content for the Lord to have his way. Now that the heart of God has been fully revealed at the cross, how much more ought we today to delight in the execution of his will. Surely we shall have no hesitation in saying “ill that he blesses is our good, and unblessed good is ill, and all is right that seems most wrong if be his sweet will,” Frederick William Faber.

And second, this doctrine is valuable in that it evokes a song of praise; it could not be otherwise. Why should I, let the Christian say, who am by nature no different than the careless and godless throngs all around, have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and now blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavens in him. Why was I that once was an alien and a rebel singled out for such wondrous favors? Ah that is something I cannot fathom; such grace, such love passeth knowledge. But, if my mind is unable to discern a reason, my heart can still express its gratitude in praise and adoration. But not only should I be grateful to God for his grace toward me in the past, but his present dealing will fill me with thanksgivings.

What is the force of that word **rejoice in the Lord always, (Phil. 4:4.)** Mark that it is not “rejoice in the savior,” but we are to rejoice in the Lord, as Lord, as the master of every circumstance. When the apostle penned these words he was himself a prisoner in the hands of the Roman government. A long course of affliction and suffering lay behind him. Perils on land and perils on sea. Hunger and thirst, scourging and stonings had all been experienced. He had been persecuted by those within the church as well as by those without. The very ones who ought to have stood by him have forsaken him. And still he writes **“rejoice in the Lord always.”** What was the secret of his peace and happiness? Had not the same apostle written

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28.)

But how did he, and how do we know that all things work together for good? The answer is because all things are under the control of, and are being regulated by, the supreme sovereign and because he has naught but thoughts of love toward his own, his elect. Then all things are so ordered by him that they are made to minister to our ultimate good.

It is for this cause we are to give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:20.)

Yes, give thanks for all things for it has been well said “our disappointments are but his appointments.” To the one who believes in the sovereignty of God and absolute predestination, the clouds not only have a silver lining but they are silver all through, the darkness only serving to offset the light so that we say “ye fearful saints, fresh courage take: the clouds ye so much dread are big with mercy and shall break with blessing o’er your head. “

And third, this doctrine guarantees the final triumph of good over evil. Ever since the day that Cain slew Abel, the conflict on earth between good and evil has been a sore problem to the saints. In every age, the righteous have been hated and persecuted whilst the unrighteous have appeared to defy God with impunity. The Lord’s people for the most part have been poor in this world’s goods, whereas the wicked in their temporal prosperity have flourished like the green bay tree. As one looks around and

beholds the oppression of believers and the earthly success of unbelievers and notes how few of the former, and how numerous the latter, as he sees the apparent defeat of the right, and the triumphing of might in the wrong, as he hears the roar of battle, the cries of the wounded, and the lamentations of the bereaved, as he discovers that almost everything down here is in confusion, chaos, and ruins, it seems as though Satan is getting the better of the conflict. But if one looks above instead of around, there is plainly visible to the eye of faith a throne: a throne unaffected by the storms of earth; a throne that is set, stable, and secure. And upon it is seated one whose name is the almighty and who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (**Eph. 1:11.**) This then, is our confidence: God is on the throne; the helm is in his hand; and, being almighty, his purpose cannot fail for he is in one mind, we read, and who can turn him, and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth (**Job. 23:13.**) Though God's governing hand is invisible to the eye of sense; it is real to faith, that faith which rests with sure confidence upon his word, and therefore is assured he cannot fail. Mr. Gabeline once wrote: "in these dark and trying times, how well it is to remember that he is on the throne, the throne which cannot be shaken, and that he will not fail in doing all that he hath spoken and promised."

Isaiah 34:16 says "seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read; not one of these shall fail."

In believing blessed anticipation, we can look on to the glory time when his word and his will is accomplished. When, through the coming of the prince of peace, righteousness and peace comes at last. And while we wait for the supreme and blessed moment when his promise to us is accomplished, we trust him, walking in his fellowship, and daily find afresh that he does not fail to sustain and keep us in all our ways.

And fourth, this doctrine is valuable in that it provides a resting place for the heart. The one seated upon the throne of heaven, the one that is governor over the nations, and who has ordained and now regulates all events, is infinite not only in power, but in wisdom and goodness as well. He who is Lord over all creation is the one that was manifest in the flesh. And here my friends, is a theme no human voice or preacher can do justice to: the glory of God consists not merely in that he is the highest, but in that being high, he stooped in lowly love to bear the burden of his own sinful creatures, for it is written

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, 1st cor. 5:19.

It is upon the gracious self-humiliation of the king himself, that his kingdom is established. Oh wondrous cross then, for by it, he who suffered upon it has become not the Lord of our destinies (for he was that before,) but the Lord of our hearts. Therefore, it is not in abject terror that we bow before the supreme sovereign, but in adoring worship we cry

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12)

Here then friends is the refutation of the wicked charge that this doctrine is a horrible calumny upon God and dangerous to expound to his people: can a doctrine be horrible and dangerous that gives God his true place, that maintains his rights, that magnifies his grace, that ascribes all glory to him, and removes every ground of boasting from the creature? Can a doctrine be horrible and dangerous which affords the saints a sense of security in danger, that supplies them comfort in sorrow, that begets patience with them in

adversity, that evokes from them praise at all times. Or can we not rather say concerning this blessed doctrine of absolute predestination and the sovereignty of God,

the Lord our God is clothed with might

*“the Lord our God is clothed with might;
the winds and waves obey his will;
he speaks, and in the shining height
the sun and rolling worlds stand still.
Rebel ye waves, and o’er the land
with threatening aspects roar,
the Lord has spoken his command
that breaks your rage upon the shore.
Ye winds of night, your force combined,
but without his holy high behest,
you shall not at a mountain pine,
disturb the little swallow’s nest.
His voice sublime is heard afar,
in distant peals it fades and dies;
he binds the cyclone to his car
and sweeps the howling murky skies.
Great God, how infinite art thou?
What weak and worthless worms are we?
Let all the race of creatures bow
and seek salvation now from thee.
Eternity with all its years
stands ever-present to thy view;
to thee there nothing old appears;
great God, there can be nothing new.
Our lives through varied streams are drawn
and vexed with mean and trifling cares,
but thine eternal thought moves on
thy fixed and undisturbed affairs.*

And now, peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, Amen.